

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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P 241030Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2246

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

USSAG PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 7521

EXDIS

DEPT PASS PRIORITY SECDEF AND CJCS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CB

SUBJECT: PRESENTATION OF A HOLDING STRATEGY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR
OTHER EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES TO THE GKR HIGH POLITICAL
COUNCIL

REF: PHNOM PENH 7467, PARA 3

1. BGEN CLELAND, COL BURNELL, AND I MET AT OUR REQUEST
JULY 24 WITH MARSHAL LON NOL AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE
HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL TO SUGGEST A HOLDING STRATEGY
FOR FANK AND OTHER MEASURES TO FORTIFY THE GKR UNTIL
NEGOTIATIONS ARE POSSIBLE OR UNTIL THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT
LESSENING OF THE CURRENT MMILITARY THREAT. ALSO PRESENT
WERE MIN DEFENSE MAJ GEN U SAY, FANK COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
MAJGEN SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ, HIS DEPUTY MAJGEN THONGVAN
FANMOUNG, AND DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY BGEN EK
PROEUNG.

2. IN MY OPENING REMARKS I STATED OUR CONCERN OVER THE
PRESENT MILITARY SITUATION AROUND THE CAPITAL AND NOTED
THE LACK OF PARTICIPATION OF THE GREAT MASS OF PEOPLE

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IN THE WAR AT THEIR DOORSTEP. I COMMENTED THAT THE

SURVIVAL OF THE REPUBLIC ITSELF IS AT STAKE; ALTHOUGH FOREIGN AID, INCLUDING OUR OWN, WILL CONTINUE, THE CITIZENS OF THE REPUBLIC ARE THEMSELVES ESSENTIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS DEFENSE. I OBSERVED THAT A CEASE-FIRE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE AT HAND; MEANWHILE, THE REPUBLIC MUST HOLD FIRMLY DURING THE WEEKS AND MONTHS TO COME PENDING NEGOTIATIONS FOR A CEASE-FIRE AND POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OR SOME REDUCTION IN THE LEVEL OF HOSTILITIES. I NOTED THAT THE ENEMY OFFENSIVE, WHILE STILL A VERY SERIOUS THREAT, HAS SHOWN SOME SIGNS OF WEAKENING AND THAT THE STRENGTH OF THE INSURGENCY IS NOT INEXHAUSTIBLE. I EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THE REPUBLIC WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD ITS OWN IF IT TAKES THE EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES NECESSARY TO CONSOLIDATE ITS MILITARY POSITION, IMPROVE FANK, AND DEVELOP GREATER POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE HOLDING ACTION WHICH IS NECESSARY.

3. FOLLOWING THIS INTRODUCTION, BGEN CLELAND PRESENTED THE BROAD OUTLINES OF THE MILITARY STRATEGY DEVELOPED BY COMUSSAG AND PRESENTED IN DETAIL TO MAJGEN SOSTHENE AND BGEN CLELAND AT NAKHOM PHANOM JULY 23. BGEN CLELAND'S REMARKS CENTERED ON THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF THE STRATEGY WHICH ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. MAINTENANCE OF FRIENDLY CONTROL OVER AN INNER CIRCLE COMPRISING POCHENTONG AND PHNOM PENH AND OVER A CAREFULLY SELECTED DEFENSIVE LINE PROPOSED BY USSAG GENERALLY AT A DISTANCE OF NO LESS THAN ELEVEN KILOMETERS FROM THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF THIS INNER CIRCLE.

B. MAINTENANCE OF FRIENDLY CONTROL OVER HIGHWAY 4 BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND KOMPONG SOM AND OVER THE MEKONG CORRIDOR.

C. TO IMPROVE CONTROL OF THE MEKONG CORRIDOR, LAUNCHING OF AN OPERATION TO DISENGAGE THE ENEMY WELL BEFORE AUGUST 15 FROM SECTORS OF HIGHWAY ONE UNDER HIS CONTROL BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND NEAK LUONG.

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D. CONSOLIDATION OF FRIENDLY FORCES TO PERFORM PRIORITY DEFENSE MISSIONS. THIS WOULD IMPLY (1) LEAVING THE DEFENSE OF HIGHWAY 5 BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND BATTAMBANG TO TERRITORIAL UNITS WITHOUT THE COMMITMENT OF INTERVENTION FORCES (WHICH ARE NEEDED ELSEWHERE) TO KEEP IT OPEN; (2) THE EVACUATION PRIOR TO AUGUST 15 OF SUCH NON-ESSENTIAL FRIENDLY POSITIONS AS SRANG (RTE. 26), TRAM KHAR (RTE. 3), ROMEAS (RTE. 27), SKOUN (RTE. 7),

TANG KOUK (RTE. 6), AND SAANG (BASSAC).

E. IMMEDIATE TRANSFER OF SOME 5,000 FANK HEADQUARTERS
AND OTHER PERSONNEL FROM PHNOM PENH TO INTERVENTION
UNITS.

F. REORGANIZATION OF THE ARTILLERY COMMAND AND
DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN FOR THE MORE EFFECTIVE DEPLOYMENT
OF THE SEVENTY 105 HOWITZERS AND EIGHT 155 HOWITZERS
WHICH WILL BE AVAILABLE TO FANK IN THE CAPITAL AREA.

G. REORGANIZATION OF KAF ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THAT
PRIORITY TASKS ARE ACCOMPLISHED, SKILLED PERSONNEL PUT
IN A FULL WORKING DAY, AND MISSIONS ARE SCHEDULED AND
CONTROLLED PROPERLY SO AS TO MAKE FULL USE OF ITS
INCREASED INVENTORY OF AIRCRAFT (ADDITIONAL T-28'S AND
C-123'S WILL MORE THAN DOUBLE KAF CAPABILITY).

NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED SECDEF AND CJCS BY OCT.

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CINCPAC PRIORITY

USSAG PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 7521

EXDIS

H. BETTER TARGET ACQUISITION AND USE OF U.S. AIR
BY GROUND UNITS IN ORDER TO TAKE MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE OF
OUR AIR COMBAT SUPPORT THROUGH AUGUST 14.

4. WE MENTIONED THAT WE HAD DEVELOPED SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS

FOR IMPROVING FANK PERFORMANCE WHICH WE WERE PASSING SEPARATELY TO MAJGEN SOSTHENE. THEY INCLUDE SUCH MEASURES AS INCREASING CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY, BETTER SECURITY MEASURES, CLOSER SUPERVISION OF TROOPS WHO TEND TO SLEEP AND EAT UNLESS OTHERWISE DIRECTED, HIGH COMMAND AND STAFF VISITS TO THE FRONT, COMMANDERS REMAINING WITH UNITS UNLESS ORDERED AWAY, IMPROVED COORDINATION OF FIRE SUPPORT AND INFANTRY MANEUVER, AND A GENERAL IMPROVEMENT IN INITIATIVE AND SPEED OF REACTION.

5. NOTING THAT THE EMERGENCY REQUIRED A GREATER MOBILIZATION OF THE POPULATION OF THE CAPITAL AREA AND ACCOMPANYING MEASURES OF AUSTERITY REFLECTING THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS EFFORT, WE PROPOSED THE FOLLOWING MEASURES TO THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL.

A. IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF OBLIGATORY MILITARY SERVICE.

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B. ESTABLISHMENT OF CURFEW AT 2100 HOURS, WITH RIGOROUS ENFORCEMENT.

C. ELIMINATION OF LARGE RECEPTIONS, DINNERS, AND OTHER NON-ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS.

D. EXTENSION OF THE WORKING DAY OF FUNCTIONARIES.

E. MOBILIZATION OF STUDENTS INTO BRIGADES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AROUND THE CAPITAL AND FOR ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES.

F. ORGANIZATIONS OF WOMEN'S GROUPS FOR WORK IN HOSPITALS, REFUGEE CAMPS, ORPHANAGES, ETC.

G. FURTHER STEPS TO ASSURE AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION RICE.

H. PROPAGATION OF THESE MEASURES THROUGH AN INTENSIVE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN TO BE LAUNCHED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL AND THE GOVERNMENT.

6. DURING THIS PRESENTATION MARSHAL LON NOL INTERRUPTED SEVERAL TIMES TO INDICATE APPROVAL, TO OBSERVE THAT THE NECESSARY ACTIONS ARE IN SOME CASES ALREADY UNDER WAY, AND AT ONE POINT TO REQUEST AN ADDITIONAL ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER SQUADRON FOR DEPLOYMENT TO BATTAMANG WHERE IT COULD BE USED TO KEEP HIGHWAY 5 OPEN. (BGEN CLELAND COMMENTED THAT ALL SUCH SQUADRONS WILL BE

REQUIRED FOR HIGHER PRIORITY DEFENSE MISSIONS). ALTHOUGH THEY SAID NOTHING, THE OTHER KHMER OFFICIALS APPEARED TO FOLLOW THIS PRESENTATION ATTENTIVELY AND WITH SOME INTEREST AND COMPREHENSION.

7. COMMENT. IT IS DIFFICULT TO GAUGE WHAT REAL IMPACT THESE SUGGESTIONS WILL HAVE ON GKR AND FANK PERFORMANCE SINCE THERE IS TYPICALLY AN ENORMOUS LAG BETWEEN KHMER INTENT AND KHMER IMPLEMENTATION. THE HOLDING STRATEGY DEVELOPED BY USSAG IN COORDINATION WITH THIS MISSION SHOULD PROVE TO BE EXTREMELY USEFUL TO FANK, AND IN AN EFFORT TO FACILITATE ITS IMPLEMENTATION I ASKED THE
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MARSHAL TO CONSIDER GIVING EXTRAORDINARY AUTHORITY AND A REASONABLY FREE HAND TO MAJGEN SOSTHENE FOR ITS EXECUTION. RALLYING THE PUBLIC TO THE CAUSE IS LIKELY TO FALL PRINCIPALLY TO PRIME MINISTER IN TAM AND HIS GOVERNMENT. HE IS BETTER EQUIPPED THAN OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, GIVEN HIS POPULARITY, TO ACCOMPLISH THE VERY MODEST GAINS IN THIS AREA WHICH ARE PROBABLY ALL THAT CAN BE HOPED FOR. AT THE LEAST, WE HAVE FOCUSED THE LEADERSHIP'S ATTENTION ON A PROGRAM FOR SURVIVAL.
SWANK

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